

RAMPARTS
June 10P-Turner, William
DePugh, Robert B.
Org. Minutemen
CIA - New Orleans
Garrison, Jim

DePugh and the Minutemen: Wonderland of the Mind



ROBERT BOLIVAR DE PUGH apparently possesses that special staying power of a man obsessed, in his case with the omnipresences of Communism and Socialism. DePugh is the national coordinator and founding father of the Minutemen, paramilitary organization of the ultra-right. But over the past three years, the title seems to have become more titular than real. Not that the Minutemen are withering away; if anything they have become stronger. But an internal power struggle—the opposition consisting of those who consider him too tame—evidently has robbed DePugh of much of his authority.

I first met DePugh in 1966 while researching an article on the Minutemen (RAMPARTS, January 1967). We had conversed in the cluttered office of Biolabs Inc., his family-run veterinary medicine firm located in Norborne, a dot on the rich and rolling farmland of northwest Missouri. DePugh, a ruggedly handsome man in his mid-forties with intent dark eyes and receding black hair, was calm and businesslike as he talked about the Minutemen and their manifesto. He observed that the country had, for all practical purposes, gone Communist during Franklin Roosevelt's second term, and that only revolutionary, not political means, could reclaim it.

NOW, THREE YEARS LATER, he looked much as he had before, although his changed circumstances showed how much water had passed under the bridge. This time I interviewed DePugh in a holding cell in the U.S. Marshal's office in Kansas City, where he had been brought from Leavenworth Penitentiary to stand trial for having jumped bail. The charge stemmed from his having gone underground for a year and a half, during which time he roamed the western United States disguised in the improbable garb of a hippie and sent off "Underground News Bulletins" to the media. I was in Kansas City, having been subpoenaed as a defense witness in the case. Also in the cell were his two attorneys, one from Legal Aid—DePugh had claimed indigent defendant status—and the other a volunteer with a professional interest in the legal issues raised.

For all his wild rhetoric, DePugh rarely has been known to lose his cool, and he hadn't lost it now. He outlined for me the technical defense he and his attorneys were considering for the trial, due to get under way the next morning. Very simply, he said, he had skipped bail because of fear for his life. There were indications, he explained, that an opposing element of the radical right had marked him for death, and there had been no point in going to the FBI

for protection because the FBI was in cahoots with this very element. It was clear that DePugh was alluding to a Minutemen splinter group that he had earlier described as a "Nazi clique."

DePugh had first brought up the existence of this clique when I telephoned him in October of 1967, a call which had been prompted by his public statement that "When fascism comes to the United States it will come in the guise of anti-Communism." The full statement seemed not only to confirm DePugh's known antipathy toward the American Nazi Party of George Lincoln Rockwell, but to bolster suspicions of a deep rift between DePugh and factions of his own organization. On the urging of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, I made the call and posed the possibility that renegade Minutemen had been involved in the Kennedy assassination. DePugh readily agreed, saying that he had some evidence that might explain unanswered questions about events at Dealey Plaza in Dallas. It was only a few months after this exploratory contact on the topic of the assassination that the chief Minuteman had gone underground.

Pacing back and forth in the cell, DePugh said that Garrison had also been subpoenaed but had balked at appearing, on the grounds of a recent back operation. DePugh explained Garrison's role in his case: "When I talked with Jim on the phone [in October 1967], he told me about the mysterious deaths of a number of figures in his investigation." Among those whose deaths had been listed by Garrison were three men who by DePugh's admission were members of the Minutemen.

It was hoped that I would testify to the brief telephone discussion on the assassination in 1967 as well as enumerate the strange deaths. In addition, DePugh was a bit paranoid on the subject of FBI harassment and surveillance, and was convinced that agents had burglarized records in his Richmond, Missouri, facility. Could I attest, on the basis of my own experience, that such tactics were in fact regularly employed by the Bureau? During the discussion, one of the attorneys was summoned outside to answer a telephone call. "I ran into an FBI agent in the corridor," he mentioned later. "He said he'd give anything to hear what was going on in here."

If DePugh's fears about the FBI were slightly overwrought, his concern about Minutemen spin-off factions was not. One bit of extraneous matter which had been dredged up by the Garrison probe was the existence of a paramilitary cell in New Orleans whose leader, a retired Army officer, claimed to be "national commander" of the Minutemen. And in Los Angeles and Orange County, California, there is a clique that privately calls itself the "Real Minutemen." Some of DePugh's former members are literally Nazis, having gone over to the American Nazi Party (ANP). Wasn't the ANP a gross burlesque, I asked him? "Not at all," he replied, naming a prominent Texas oil millionaire as its chief financier. "It has the best underground in the right wing."

THE SCHISM BETWEEN Nazis and Minutemen is based at least in part on ideological differences. To DePugh and his loyalists, the primary enemy is Washington, the seat of power of an increasingly large central bureaucracy. DePugh once stated on a radio

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH Sun., Oct. 20, 1968 21A

Minutemen Warned On 'CIA-Backed Rivals'

By ROBERT H. COLLINS
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Robert B. DePugh, national leader of the Minutemen, says that some Minutemen "have been tricked into joining a competing organization that is secretly financed by the Central Intelligence Agency." The statement is in a "special bulletin" being circulated among members of the militant, far-right group.

"I know that some of you to whom this bulletin is being mailed have been sold a bunch of lies as to what amateurs the Minutemen were, and you have been invited in great secrecy to join the real 'professional' underground," the bulletin states.

"I hope all who have been tricked in this manner will write to me now through the mail drop stappled to the front of this bulletin and give us all the details as to how this happened to you," the bulletin continues. "Those who have not been approached in this way, be on your guard and report any such contact at once to the national headquarters."

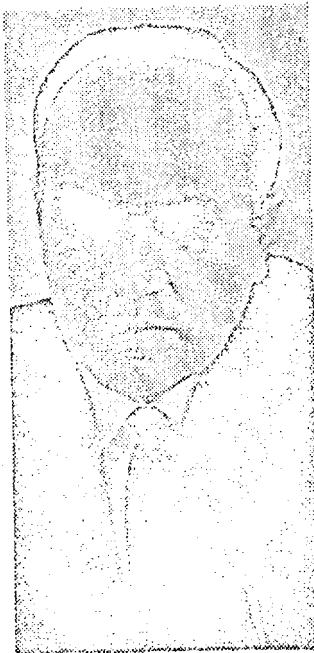
DePugh a Fugitive

DePugh and his principal lieutenant, Walter P. Peyson, have eluded the Federal Bureau of Investigation for eight months. They are fugitives from Seattle, Wash., on federal conspiracy charges.

DePugh's bulletin does not name the alleged rival right-wing organization, but it contends that the other group is being financed by the CIA "to draw members and prospective members away from the Minutemen."

"Enemies of the Minutemen (supposedly the other right-wing group) have spread rumors of poor security, corruption and selfish interests within the national organization," DePugh says in the bulletin.

"Our present circumstances



Robert B. DePugh

and sacrifices prove one thing more — they prove just how phony those people are" who spread such rumors, the bulletin continues.

Headquarters Undisclosed

DePugh says in the communication that "no one has revealed the location of our underground headquarters, and no one has turned me in. Not only do I carry on an active correspondence with hundreds of people, but I have traveled far and wide in recent months."

Further referring to security measures, DePugh asks in the bulletin: "Where was I yesterday? Where will I be tomorrow? Who is the secretary who will type this bulletin from my longhand notes?"

"Where is the photographic laboratory where the negatives will be developed and the printing plates made? Where is the printing plant where this bulletin and much other literature

are being printed? Who are the couriers that will pick them up and carry them to regional headquarters? Who are the area co-ordinators who will remail these bulletins from 25 different cities?"

DePugh says in the bulletin that "for many months now the FBI has made a frantic effort to learn the answers to these questions. They have not answered one of them! The importance of this should be impressed on every member. The rumors of poor security in the national organization simply are not true!"

Blames Ousted Members

DePugh says that the rumors of poor security came from "disgruntled ex-members who were kicked out of the organization because they did not meet our high standards."

The competing "and supposedly right-wing organization that is secretly financed by the CIA" also has been responsible for spreading the rumors in an effort to break up the Minutemen, DePugh says in the bulletin.

The bulletin was sent to "our currently active members so that they can avoid being influenced by such rumors," DePugh writes. "It is also being sent to many ex-members and those who are no longer active."

"To those of you who have dropped out of the Minutemen because of such rumors, I'm now asking you to review the facts in your own mind and see if you haven't been misled. You are still needed in the fight to restore our constitutional republic."

'Traitor' Cards

DePugh wrote that a few weeks before distribution of the bulletin, "we sent out 20,000 'Traitors Beware' cards to some of our members to be remailed to Reds in their areas. One member sent the cards back saying that it looked to him like a scheme to trap him on a charge of 'sending threatening

literature through the mail."

"This is nonsense! If a person can't remail a few letters without getting caught at it, what chance will he have to survive at all under complete 'police state' conditions?"

(The "Traitor Beware" cards apparently are those containing the Minutemen's widely quoted threat to "the Judases" who they say are trying to sell out this country to the Communists: "Traitors beware! Even now the cross-hairs are on the back of your necks.")

Building Confidence

DePugh says in the bulletin that all Minutemen "need to do small things like this (mailing 'Traitors Beware' cards) — even if they are technical violations of the law — in order to build up their own self confidence and to prove to themselves that we can outwit and outmaneuver those who oppose us."

"It is also a mistake to think you can avoid arrest by always staying within the law. When the time comes that the Government parasites decide they must get rid of you, they will not hesitate to frame you on some charge of which you are completely innocent."

"We must not be fooled by enemy propaganda designed to make us lose confidence in our own organization. We must not be misled by rumor campaigns spread by agents provocateur. The slogan, 'the best defense is a good offense,' applies as well to resistance warfare as it does to conventional warfare."